



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE RECEIVES \$875,000 FORFEITURE FROM DECOSTER

Egg producer has paid more than \$2 million for employing illegal aliens

OMAHA, Neb.—The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office here has received a restitution check in the amount of \$883,675.43, the final payment from Iowa egg producer Austin “Jack” DeCoster, who pleaded guilty in federal court in August 2003 to two counts of aiding and abetting the continued employment of illegal aliens.

More than 100 illegal aliens were arrested during the course of the investigation.

DeCoster has also paid \$1.25 million in asset forfeiture, bringing the total he has surrendered to the federal government to more than \$2,133,000. The recent check for \$883,675.43 includes \$875,000 paid by DeCoster plus interest earned while the money awaited disbursement by a federal judge.

“I think the amount of this check sends a strong message to employers who knowingly hire unauthorized workers,” said Resident Agent-in-Charge Michael Wardy of the Omaha ICE office. “The message is this: You could pay dearly for violating the law.”

The case began in the mid-1990s as a result of complaints from communities where DeCoster’s facilities are located. DeCoster pleaded guilty in August 2003 and was sentenced to five years’ probation on Nov. 25, 2003 in federal court in Sioux City, Iowa.

As part of a plea agreement, DeCoster also agreed to a five-year compliance program that allows ICE officers access to personnel records on demand and the right to make unannounced inspections of employees at DeCoster’s egg production facilities. The compliance program also requires DeCoster to provide training to personnel employees on hiring practices.

The joint federal-local investigation ultimately resulted in 18 convictions and more than \$2,500,000 in financial penalties. In addition to the money disbursed to ICE, the Wright County Sheriff’s Office in Clarion, Iowa received a total of \$347,000 for its part in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by ICE and the Wright County Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Office of Inspector General of the Social Security Administration and the FBI. Assistant U.S. Attorney Judith Whetstine of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Iowa prosecuted the case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.